



# WOMEN, FAMILY AND SOCIALISM

BY  
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TO  
*MY MOTHER*

Woman is the female of the human species, and not a different kind of animal with specific charms and specific imbecilities.

—BERNARD SHAW

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## I. WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

India is passing today through a social and political upheaval. Political freedom has been won; and a social emancipation from the tyranny of the dead and fossilized past will have to follow close upon it. To use the now hackneyed phrase, our entire scheme of social values is 'in the melting pot'. But very soon this molten thought-material will begin to crystallize. Before this takes place, it is essential to carry out a thorough and ruthless examination of ourselves and our way of life. Before we can begin to put our spiritual house in order, we must have a clear idea of the kind of house we would wish to have. For only by clarification of ends can we hope to find means for their realization.

The status of women in relation to the family and society presents one of the most important problems confronting us today. The family is in many ways the fly-wheel of the great social machine. On its structure depends in large measure the character of society as a whole. Whether there is to be in our society freedom, equality and love, or slavery, inequality and hatred, will depend largely on how we re-form the family. Our present family, like everything else in the country, is fast disintegrating. Destructive forces have undermined it so drastically that a three-thousand-year-old institution is crumbling to dust. This, therefore, is the proper time to enquire into the basis of human society and essentials of the good life, so that we may be able to decide whether we shall have a family at all, and if so, what of kind of family.



Much of our thought on this subject is muddled to a degree. Egoism, conservatism, ignorance, smug complacency, and even downright irrationalism interfere in most minds with a rational consideration of the subject. Passions run high, issues are confused, all sense of the comparative values of things is lost. A clarification and a straightening of this problem are therefore more than ever necessary at this critical hour.

It is such a clarification and a straightening of ends and means that is attempted here. This might appear too egoistic and ambitious a plan. I am aware that I am not going to say much that could be called original. Almost all that will be said here has been already said many times over by abler men and women. But most of these writings are 'learned' and therefore inaccessible to most men and women. And that is my justification in writing this essay. I hope to present here a brief but complete, simple yet not (I trust) superficial, analysis of the problem for the busy and lay reader who has neither the time nor the equipment necessary for the study of long and learned treatises. At the same time, I also hope that this little book will not be altogether valueless even for the serious and advanced student of the subject.

### **The Plan of the Book**

But before I pass on to deal with the subject, let me pause here for a moment to summarize briefly the general plan of this book.

Every social problem has to be attacked from two points of view, the sociological and the ethical. By 'Sociology' I mean the science which formulates the laws that correlate changing trends in social behaviour; and by 'Ethics' the science which attempts to tell us what is good

and what is evil, what we ought to do and what we ought not to do. A little reflection will convince anybody that the aid of both these sciences is necessary for the solution of any social problem. A social problem is a demand for the production of a certain result in society. It is the business of Sociology to tell us what means will enable us to produce that result. But this is evidently not enough. It is further necessary to enquire whether the said result is such that it would be desirable to produce it. And this Ethics alone can tell. It follows that the problem which forms the subject of the present essay will have both these aspects. In the sociological part of this essay I shall try to answer the question: 'Is emancipation of women possible and if so, how can we bring it about?' In the ethical part, I shall try to answer the question: 'Is emancipation of women *desirable*?' I shall argue on sociological grounds that emancipation of women is certainly possible, and that in a measure as complete as one could wish, if we adopt a few suitable reforms. And I shall argue on ethical grounds that such complete emancipation of women is desirable, that in other words, a society in which women are free would be a better society than one in which they are not.

## II. SOCIOLOGY OF WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

### What 'Emancipation' Means

It is essential to get a few notions clarified before we can proceed to treat the subject along the lines indicated. The first of these is the notion of 'emancipation'. The dictionary tells us that emancipation means 'liberation from restraint'. Now what is the nature of this liberation

or freedom which is implied when we talk of the emancipation of women?

If we think of the problem closely, we shall find that freedom cannot mean much unless it is protected by some sovereign power. If you can interfere with impunity with anything that I may be doing, it cannot be said that I am really free to do it, even though there may be no law forbidding me to do it. It follows that if a man has freedom to do a thing, no other man must have freedom to interfere with him, and this will not be the case unless the first man is protected by some sovereign power from encroachment on his freedom by the second man. In human society today such a protection is afforded by the State, which makes encroachment on other men's liberties punishable. Without such a protection freedom will be a mere word without any meaning. It will be observed that freedom is thus broadly equivalent to 'right'; and it is in this sense that freedom is demanded for women. This it is extremely important to clarify and emphasize; because it is customary to reply to women's demand for freedom that women do actually possess this freedom, and that they are in reality mistresses of their households. That such a reply contains a palpable falsehood will be shown presently. Here it is sufficient to note that even if this were true, that would not make women's demand for freedom superfluous; for it is not freedom on sufferance but freedom by right, that women are demanding. And it is amply clear that they do not possess this latter kind of freedom.

The second point which must be clarified is the extent of freedom which is demanded for women. The answer to this question must be that the extent of freedom for women is the same as the extent of freedom for men.

For when we say that women are in subjection, we imply that men are their masters; so that if women are to be set free, it must be by the abolition of men's mastery. If women had less freedom than men, we could not say that they were as free as they could be. For this reason, emancipation of women means the same thing as establishment of equality of the sexes.

### Causes of Inequality

Having thus defined the terms 'freedom' and 'freedom of women', we can now begin to tackle the problem in hand. To begin with, it is clear that barring the U. S. S. R. and to a lesser extent, some of the western countries, women are everywhere in more or less complete subjection. It is in fact so clear that I shall not labour the point. There are a great many causes which have been responsible for this subjection. Some of these causes are natural, while others are purely artificial or man-made. Unless these causes are removed, unless at least their operation is limited to an irreducible minimum, we cannot even begin to bring about equality of the sexes. I shall therefore now pass on to state what these causes are, and to enquire how we can either eliminate them completely, or at least limit their operation.

### Maternity

The greatest natural barrier (the only natural cause of inequality I am going to consider) in the way of the freedom of women is the fact of maternity. How difficult, sometimes how dangerous this function is needs no explanation. Suffice it to say that it is a handicap the like of which is not to be found in the case of man, and that it goes a long way in bringing about woman's slavery.

Think of the loss of freedom which the birth of a single baby involves. There is first the pregnancy, the laborious carrying of the child in the womb for several months, during the last few of which the expectant mother becomes practically incapable of any vigorous activity. Then there is the birth of the child, which is very much like a surgical operation. A couple of months have to pass before the mother can recover from its ravages. But that is not the end of the matter. The baby has to be fed; nursed continuously with infinite care for years before it can be handed over to the doubtful care of school-teachers. All this is involved in the birth of a single child. I need not dilate on this point; it is too common and obvious to require much explaining. And enough has been said to show that maternity implies a period, a long period, during which a woman cannot earn her own livelihood and has to depend on somebody else. If there are repeated pregnancies—as there always are, for contraception is new and hateful yet—it is clear that a woman must spend the major part of her life in giving birth to children and rearing them, all the time depending on the husband for the means of keeping body and soul together.

This is the one great natural cause of the subjection of women.

### **The Patriarchal Family**

I shall now turn to the artificial causes. These are the customs and institutions which have been invented by men in the course of history, and which supplement the natural advantage which man has over woman. All these can be grouped together and called collectively 'the patriarchal family'. A little reflection is enough to show

that the family all over the world today. (with the exception of the U.S.S.R.) is patriarchal or one in which the father rules. It is true that with the march of time the rule of the father has become circumscribed in certain directions; but the main features of the family still remain predominantly patriarchal. I shall mention here some of the main features of the patriarchal family, each of which will be seen to be inimical to women's freedom.

1. The first of these is the economic dependence of women. I have already referred to the handicap of maternity; the economic dependence of women is the direct outcome of it. Unable to support herself, she is sent to the harem and the kitchen, and the husband holding the purse-strings, becomes the master of the household. It is not as if woman does not do anything worthwhile. For even if she did not do anything else, she discharges two important social duties—of giving birth to children, and bringing them up. And besides, most women, in fact the great majority of them, have to do also the cooking, washing, sewing, and a dozen other daily tasks of the household. But for all this very useful and very hard work she does not get a farthing in return! Not only that, she is continuously taught that it is in the faithful discharge of her home-duties that a woman finds her self-respect and perfection. If some woman does try to earn her own living, countless obstacles obstruct her at every turn. Many professions simply close their doors upon her; and others give her a smaller pay than man's for equal work. Besides many legal disabilities are created to prevent her from owning and disposing of incomes. Now money and economic independence are the main sources of power in our society; so if woman is economically powerless, it is no wonder that she is only

a slave in disguise.

2. The second feature of the patriarchal family which is inimical to women's freedom is the insistence on the "virtue" of wives. The reader must not forthwith jump to the conclusion that I regard marital loyalty as bad or that I am advocating promiscuous sexual relations. The point to be considered is that there is here an inequality of treatment as given to men and women. The virtue of wives, while it may be a great good, is insisted upon, not because of its goodness, but because of the jealousy of the proprietary male. Patriarchy is the real cause of this insistence. The father regards his wife as a piece of his property and naturally resents the idea of her having sexual relations with other men. There is also another reason why the husband insists on his wife's loyalty. As the master of the household he has to support the children of his wife; and he wants to make sure that the children he is feeding and bringing up are his own and not another man's. This is why loyalty is compulsory in women, whereas it is only optional in men. And this is how patriarchy and the virtue of wives are related. That this makes for inequality is too patent to require further clarification.

3. Another feature of the patriarchal family is the indissolubility of the marriage-tie on the wife's side. The Hindu Law, for example, based on Hindu religious texts, allows a man to marry any number of times; but his wife even after abandonment remains his wife to the end of her days and must not remarry. Matters are a little different in Christian communities where until recently no divorce was allowed even to men; and is now allowed in a few exceptional circumstances both to men and women. But the restriction in the one case, and the op-

portunity in the other are both unfair to women. For in the former case, it is always easy for a husband to escape from an unpleasant wife but for a wife there is no escape from an unpleasant husband; and in the latter case, numerous things prevent her from availing herself of the opportunity. Among other things her economic slavery makes divorce an impracticable proposition; because unless she can marry again and speedily, she may have to starve. As Bernard Shaw has put it bluntly, but very truly, a husband is more necessary to a woman than a master to a dog. All of which brings home to us again the far-reaching results of the economic slavery of women.

4. The fourth feature of the patriarchal family is the preferential treatment given to sons and the neglect of daughters. It is patriarchy that is responsible for the notion that only a son can perpetuate a family; there is not a scrap of evidence for it in biological science. Think of the mad preoccupation of our ancestors with sons. Think of the hundreds of verses in our scriptures in which our forefathers prayed to the gods that they may get a hundred sons. But does anybody pray for a daughter? Nor is this surprising. Destined under the patriarchal system to be another man's property, a daughter is obviously a bad proposition for investment of her father's money in the form of education. Most girls are not brought up to be anything better than housekeepers. Our whole conception of girls' education has become thoroughly vitiated. We look upon girls not as ends in themselves, but as means: we want them to be not good citizens, but good wives. Girls are given education in order that they may please their husbands, and only such education as will enable them to do so.



why such arts as music and dancing and the rest occupy such a disproportionately high place in the curriculum of girls' education.

I have now summarized the main causes which are responsible for the subjection of women. It is clear that so long as these causes are in operation we cannot hope to emancipate women. This therefore introduces us to the next question which we must answer: Can we eliminate these causes, and if so, how?

### **Remedies against Inequality**

We will deal with the causes of inequality in the order in which they have been summarized above. So, let us begin with maternity.

### **Control of Maternity**

Now it is evident that the fact of maternity is one which we cannot alter, at least at the present stage of our knowledge. But by means of a few suitable legislative measures, its operation in respect of the dependence of women on men can be entirely removed. The first of these reforms would have to be the restriction of the number of pregnancies to a necessary minimum. This is necessary not only in the interest of mothers, but in that of children also. Repeated pregnancies shatter the health of mothers, and prevent them from doing other kinds of creative and important work; worse still, they also increase the size of the family which leads to a drastic lowering of the standard of life, with very adverse effects upon the upbringing of the children. Among other things it renders proper medical aid inaccessible to most families, with the result that a large number of children die in infancy. This high infant-mortality could be

largely prevented by the restriction of families to a necessary minimum determined by social requirements. The present way of dealing with over-population is infant-mortality, pestilence and war. Whether it would not be better on the whole not to bring too many children into the world, than to first bring them and then kill them, is a question which can be answered without much learning.

### Maternity Allowance

A second reform which is necessary for removing the dependence of women resulting from maternity is what has been called 'Maternity Allowance'. This will provide paid leave to mothers in the last two months of pregnancy and about two months after child-birth. This will remove the necessity of having to depend upon the husband for the means of livelihood during those months.

But even these two reforms will not completely remove the handicap of maternity. For the duties of the mother are not over after the birth of the child. Rather do they begin there; for the child has to be carefully looked after for several years. This makes very large demands on the time and energy of mothers. To overcome this disadvantage it will be necessary to introduce a third reform, viz., the taking over of the care of the young by creches or nurseries. A good deal of misunderstanding prevails in this country about the actual working of the nurseries, and alarming pictures are drawn of what is called the mass-production of minds. That the nurseries do not involve any such thing we shall try to show later. For the present it is enough to note that given these reforms maternity will cease to be a handicap as it unfortunately is at present.

## Economic Independence for Women

Turning now to the artificial causes of the inequality of men and women, the first thing to be done is to destroy the economic slavery of women. This can be done effectively by opening out to women all professions and allowing them to choose according to inclination and capacity. In order to accomplish this it would of course be necessary to give a proper education to girls. The prevalent idea that women's education ought to be essentially different from men's must be given up; for it is an idea which cannot be upheld with any show of reason in the modern world. Girls should be made to understand clearly that they have to stand on their own legs and that dependence on husbands is a weakness to be avoided. Also it would be necessary to pay men and women equally for equal work, and to make women the sole mistresses of the fruits of their own labour.

This is the place to consider an objection often made. "We may grant", it is said, "that women ought to be economically independent; but where is the work for them to do? There is widespread unemployment already, even without competition from women; would not the confusion be worse confounded by the introduction of women into the fray?" This has always seemed to me a very strange objection. A stranger from another planet listening to it would conclude that in our society women do not work at all: how else could men ask as to where from we are to procure work for women? The truth of the matter is that in our society countless women toil, managing the entire household, bearing children, rearing them, cooking, washing, sewing, doing a hundred other things. But for this very hard labour they do not get any remuneration. This fact is so iniquitous that it

would be staggering, were it not that our sensibilities have become dulled by usage. Now our objectors evidently believe women will continue to do this household work as before without any kind of remuneration, and that henceforth they may also do some other work in their spare time and earn some money. That this is ridiculous need not be said. The work which women are doing today will have to be done by somebody always, and it may be that it will be done largely by women themselves in future also. It will not therefore be necessary to set about the foolish business of inventing new professions for women. All that would be necessary is to pay women for the work they are doing. It is true that if they are freed from their bondage to the household, more women will enter what are supposed to be men's professions; but there cannot be any serious objection to this, considering that today a good many men are doing what has traditionally been woman's work, viz., cooking, washing, sewing, etc. In truth, of course, the distinction sought to be made between male and female occupations is artificial and based on that imprisonment of women in homes which is characteristic of patriarchy. There is no reason why any work should not be done equally well by men or women without distinction. And it is well to remember that this has to a large extent been achieved in the U.S.S.R. after the Revolution. There is not a single walk of life into which women have not entered with men or where they have not proved themselves worthy of the opportunities offered them by the Soviet State.

A good deal of unnecessary and useless and sometimes even silly controversy is carried on as to how women should be paid for their household work. Some

have suggested that husbands should pay their wives for the house-keeping and other services which they may render. This would be not only impracticable in most cases, but even self-defeating. The object we want to achieve is the equality of the sexes; but the means suggested will only make man the pay-master and woman his wage-slave. Besides, this will destroy entirely that sense of comradeship and love on which alone a healthy and beautiful family life can be based. For this reason the solution referred to must be rejected outright. In its place I suggest an alternative which in my view meets the requirements of the case and is compatible with that familiar relation so desirable between the sexes. It is also the one which has been largely put into practice in the U. S. S. R. This solution is the *socialization of household work*. Since this reform is often misunderstood, let me pause here to explain it at some length.

### Socialization of Household Work.

Today all household work in our country is done in each household separately by one or more women. This means that in every household women are engaged practically for all their waking hours in cooking, washing, sewing, and looking after children. Socialization of this work means merely its removal from homes and its management outside homes on a collective basis. Let me illustrate this for cooking, for example. At the present time in our society in each household at least one and generally two or more women have to spend nearly four hours every day in cooking. As I have said already, they do not get any remuneration for this hard work. But now see how socialization revolutionizes the whole situation. Supposing that there are about a hundred

homes in a little village, there would be about a hundred women engaged for about four hours a day in the kitchen. If we socialize this work, the entire cooking can be done by about ten to fifteen women in the same period of time, thus leaving nearly eighty-five women free for doing other important work, such as nursing and teaching. The money received in return for food supplied can be shared by the women who run the boarding house. Introduction of machinery would further economize the process. The result would be that good food would be available at reasonable prices, women would be freed from their bondage to the kitchen, and a way will have been found for remunerating them without interfering with family-relationships. Similar arrangements can be made for the care of the young. At present the mother of the family, having to look after the entire household, has little time left for the care of the young, and we know that many—alas too many—mothers have to put their little ones to sleep with a dose of opium. But socialize the work and see how perfectly simple it all becomes! The child when it is a few months old can be sent to the nursery, where for six to eight hours it will be in the charge of trained nurses and teachers. Its mother will be able to see it and feed it every three or four hours, and take it home after her day's work. On going home she will not have to face a mountain of household work waiting for her: all household work having been socialized, she will have all her evenings to herself, which she can spend in playing with her children, reading books, or visiting theatres..... The scheme is being worked entirely successfully in the Soviet Union today; all scepticism about its practicability is therefore totally unreasonable and baseless.

## Some Other Reforms

So much about the economic independence of women. In many ways this measure is basic to all other measures designed to bring about equality of the sexes. Economic independence brings with it self-respect, and the person conscious of this feeling will not easily tolerate any encroachment on his or her liberties. For this reason, once economic independence is secured to women, the other measures necessary to bring about equality will come about practically as a matter of course. Let us however say a word about each of these.

One of the causes of inequality of men and women is the insistence on the virtue of wives, which is essential under the patriarchal family, without any insistence on the virtue of husbands. This inequality can be remedied in one of two ways, either by insisting on loyalty by both sides, or by giving freedom to both sides. Personally I think that the second of these is the better, because though the first secures equality, it does not secure freedom, whereas the second gives us both, and because, as I shall argue later, freedom is the most valuable of intrinsic goods, and therefore well worth having even at considerable cost. Besides, in the particular province with which we are dealing at present, viz. family-relationship, freedom is the life-giving principle. By smothering it we shall be destroying the one thing which ought never to be smothered; for it is this which can breathe health, vigour and vitality into our family-life.

For similar reasons divorce should be allowed to both men and women and it should be as easy as marriage. It is not possible within the compass of this little book to go into the details of this problem here; nor is this the proper place for dealing with the ethics of divorce,

which I have reserved for a later section. It will suffice to say here that this barrier which stands in the way of the freedom and equality of the sexes is purely artificial, and can be removed whenever we choose. The importance of economic independence will be evident in this connexion also. As has already been pointed out, without economic independence a woman would not dare to ask for divorce even if it were allowed, for divorce would mean starvation unless she can find another husband immediately.

Finally, the daughter must get equal rights with the son. When once the legal disabilities have vanished, the social inequalities will speedily disappear. When women become economically independent, when in the family the mother acquires a status equal to that of the father, the unequal treatment which is today given to daughters and sons will automatically disappear. Fathers will no longer have any reasons to differentiate between daughters and sons.

### Women's Emancipation Impossible without Socialism

I have so far dealt generally with the methods which if adopted will bring about equality of the sexes in our society. Now I wish to establish a proposition of great importance, which is that these methods can be adopted only under socialism, and that therefore equality of the sexes can be established under socialism alone. It is not possible here to say what socialism is in any detail, nor is it necessary. I shall mention only two fundamental principles for which all socialism stands, irrespective of its special brand. These principles are first, that all individuals in a society shall be given equal opportunity for self development regardless of sex, caste, creed or



race; and secondly, that the means of production shall be owned not privately by profiteers, but collectively by the community as a whole, thus eliminating the motive of private profit. From this definition it follows clearly that in a socialistic community equality of the sexes will be established as a matter of course as indeed it has been established in the U. S. S. R. It is equally easy to show that under any other form of government equality of men and women cannot possibly be achieved. The means by which alone such an equality can be established are of such radical and drastic character and will cost withal such enormous amounts of money, that they can be introduced by governments alone. On the other hand, it is unlikely that capitalistic governments will resort to them, seeing that many of them will seriously interfere with the principle of maximum profit. Besides it is not to be supposed that women having become free of the domination of men, will consent to be exploited by the rich. It should therefore be clearly realized by all freedom-loving men and women that without socialism there is no hope for either liberty or equality. The problem of the emancipation of women is thus only a part of the larger—much larger—problem of the emancipation of mankind from the abject slavery into which capitalism has plunged it. To realize this and to act accordingly is the duty of every man and woman to whom freedom matters.

That brings the first half of this book to a close. I hope that I have been able to show that complete equality of the sexes is certainly *possible*, and I have outlined certain measures by means of which it can be brought about. This part of my thesis is in the strictest sense scientific; because I do not think there can be two opinions

about what has been written so far. I have however yet to deal with the ethical part of the problem. I have yet to show that it is *desirable* that women be set free from their bondage, that they be made equals of men in all respects. I shall therefore now pass on to this part of my task which, as we shall see, is also the part over which fierce controversies rage.

### III. ETHICS OF EMANCIPATION

The question I am going to answer in this chapter is: 'Why freedom for women?' My answer could be: 'For the very same reasons that justify freedom for men'. But this only pushes our enquiry one step back; for it raises the question: 'What are the reasons which justify us in demanding freedom for anybody?' I shall now try to explain these reasons as briefly and clearly as I can without taking the reader too deep into ethical waters.\*

#### Intrinsic Goodness

Some things there are which we desire because they are means to some *other* things: it is for the sake of these *other* things that we desire them, not for their own sake. We pay for a knife, not for the mere possession of it, but because we want it to cut things with. We seek a medicine, not for its own sake, but because we want some ailment cured. We endeavour to bring about this or that social reform, not because of any interest in the reform considered by itself, but because by its means we hope to set right certain maladies of the body politic. That is to

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\*For a fuller treatment of this question see author's *Ethics for Everyman* (Hind Kitabs, Bombay).

say, the value of none of these things lies in itself; each owes its value to some *other* thing to which it is a means. If we did not care for those other things (which might happen if we were to become disembodied spirits, in which case we should not care to cut anything, nor cure any ailments bodily or social), the knife, the medicine and the reform would become worthless. Now it is important to realize that this is not the case with all the things which we desire or value. Let us suppose that we want a thing A because it is a means to B. The question now may be asked: Why do we want B? If we wanted *all* things for the sake of some *other* things, then we should have to say that we want B for the sake of C of which it is a means. A similar question may arise concerning C, and it will have to be answered by saying that we want C because it gives us D. And we can thus go on repeating this question and answering it for ever without any hope of coming to an end. This is evidently impossible; for in actual life we never desire a thing for the sake of an infinite number of other things. We have therefore to conclude that there are some things which we desire for *their own sake*, that is to say, not because of something else which they bring to us, but because they are themselves so good that even if they did not bring anything else in their wake, we should still desire them. That such things do really exist, and that they are not merely figments of the imaginations of professors of philosophy can be easily shown.

Take any of the actions which we do every day and which we might think to be justifiable. Take my own case. Why am I writing this book though it is causing me considerable discomfort? I think because I want men and women to read it and think about it and to

practise some at least of the things recommended in it. Supposing that you ask me why I want men and women to read my book and think about it and practise the things recommended in it, what shall I say in reply? I suppose I shall say, because the reforms suggested here will produce happiness and remove much misery. Now supposing you to be a Socratic questioner who must push enquiries back to final causes, you will ask: Why do you want happiness to be produced and misery to be removed? Before such obstinate questioning I am afraid I shall stop and think and confess myself to be at the end of my tether. I shall have to maintain that happiness is a thing which we all desire for its own sake, that it is something which is good in itself, and that therefore it does not require any justification other than itself. Such things are called in Ethics *intrinsically good* or *good in themselves*, and it is in the creation of these things that our duty consists. Among the things which are thus good in themselves moralists mention along with happiness, truth, knowledge and beauty. And if we ask what is the goal of human life, the answer given by these masters is: 'The greatest good of the greatest number', including under 'good' the realization of happiness, the pursuit of truth, the acquirement of knowledge, and the creation and appreciation of beautiful things.

### **Freedom an Indispensable Condition of Good**

We are now in a position to justify the demand for freedom. Freedom is valuable because it is an indispensable condition for the good or moral life which it is the duty of every human being to lead. It is only free men and women who can produce the good fruits of civilization. No discovery of science was ever made by a slave;

no bondman ever created a work of art. Denying freedom to a man is to deny to him every opportunity of leading a civilized life. But this is not all. Bondage is a great cause of unhappiness, and unhappiness is a great evil or a thing which is intrinsically bad. Even the beasts dislike bondage: that the suffering of human slaves must be infinitely more intense need not be argued. This then is the justification of freedom, that without it man becomes indistinguishable from beast. Admittedly licence which is excess of freedom is bad; because its allowance to one man conflicts with other men's freedom. If I were allowed to shoot down anyone I chose to, it would mean a drastic curtailment of the freedom of all others to move about in safety. In order therefore that all may have a certain amount of freedom, it is necessary to set a limit to everybody's freedom. And this is the only justification that can be given for the restriction of freedom. For this reason, I think, it is not freedom which requires justification, but bondage. If then I ask freedom for women, it is not for me to say why. The burden of justification lies on them who would deny it to women, who would have a whole half of the human society live in subjection. The adequate answer to the question 'Why freedom for women?', is the counter question 'Why not?'

In our next chapter we shall consider some of the answers given by men to this latter question.

#### IV. CERTAIN OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

##### *Birth-Control—Maternity Allowance—Creches & Kindergartens*

The question 'Why not freedom for women?' has been very badly answered by the opponents of women's emancipation. Many of the arguments they have used are utterly irrelevant to the point they are supposed to prove, but the irrelevance escapes notice in the sound and fury which invariably accompany discussions concerning women's freedom. One example of irrelevant argument is the assertion that because woman is physically weaker than man it is proper that her place should be the sheltered home. That this proves nothing can be easily shown. Whether a person shall work inside the house or outside it is not determined by us on considerations of bodily strength. Many men are often much weaker than women; but we do not for that reason entrust our homes to their care. It is thus clear that the fact that woman is on the whole weaker than man will not take us any nearer the proof that her proper place is the home. Another example of these specious arguments is the following. Nature, it is said, has given to woman a different role from man's; it is therefore natural that her sphere of activity should be different from his. It would be against nature—and ultimately doomed to failure—for her to try to be man's equal and compete with him in his province of action. This too is a perfectly useless argument. For while Nature may have assigned to woman a function different from man's, she (Nature) can have nothing to say about those actions which are outside that function. What is ordained by Nature is irrevocable; it is impossible

that anybody can escape it or act contrary to it. But how can you invoke Nature's authority as regards actions which are *not* ordained by her? Nature has evidently intended that woman should bear children and suckle them; but how do we know that Nature does not want her to teach in schools or practise medicine or even govern a State? The wise men who raise the bogey of Nature in order to terrify us fail to realize that culture itself is something which is not natural but artificial, and that though a reference to the magical word 'Nature' may deceive the simple and the ignorant, and may even help them to win verbal victories in debates and political meetings, it will not help the cause of rational thinking and rational living. For these reasons, I shall not waste time and space in considering arguments which are thus obviously irrelevant and wrong. I shall refer only to those arguments which at least appear to be reasonable and sound.

Now objections have been urged against every one of the reforms suggested in the foregoing part of this book. It will therefore be convenient to deal with them one by one.

It was shown in Chapter II that uncontrolled maternity is an important cause of women's dependence on men, and three reforms were suggested for removing the evil effects of maternity. These were (i) Birth-control; (ii) Maternity Allowance; and (iii) Care and education of children in creches and kindergartens. Against each of these reforms many formidable-looking objections have been levelled.

### **Birth-Control**

The objection to birth-control can be briefly

summarized as follows. Birth-control, it is said, will naturally and inevitably result in a fall in the population of a country and consequently in loss of military strength. Emancipation of women might actually result in the enslavement of a nation through its loss of man-power due to birth-control, and it has been suggested by some that this was in fact the case with France in World War II. It is further argued that birth-control is naturally practised almost exclusively by the higher classes of a society: the growth of population in the lower strata progresses at the usual tremendous rate. This results in a continuous decrease in the percentage of the more intelligent and capable individuals in the population and an increase of the less intelligent and the less capable ones. Now this is a dangerous tendency; for the leaders of society—thinkers, scientists, artists, statesmen and teachers—come mostly from the higher classes only, so that birth-control will result in a gradual but steady weeding out of the better and the more important type of individual.

These objections may be answered as follows. The real danger in our times is not under-population but over-population. (It need hardly be said that this statement applies to the modern times as a whole, and not to the immediately present war-torn condition of the world in which large numbers of the male population have been killed.) The advance of medical science and the spread of medical aid among common people result in a continual decline in the death-rate of both the young and the old. Unless there is a corresponding fall in the birth-rate of nations, there is a very real danger of over-population, which will then have to be dealt with by the crude, ancient methods of war, famine and pestilence. The



experts in the subject are of opinion that it is not easy for the earth to support a much larger population than the present one, nor, if one stops and thinks of it, is it necessary. All that we need do is to ensure the maintenance of the present number; and to ensure this it is enough if a married woman had on the average about three children. The famous biologist, J. B. S. Haldane says:

"So far as can be ascertained from the figures before me, to prevent a decrease of the population, a married woman should have, on the average, about two and half children. Allowing for natural sterility and early deaths, the average healthy mother should have just over three..... An average of four would lead to an increase of population which would ultimately cause gross over-crowding." (*Inequality of Man*, p. 226).

Similar remarks have been made by Havelock Ellis:

"In England, it is calculated, an average of about 2.5 children per marriage now amply suffices to do more than maintain a stationary population, by ensuring a considerable increase. The optimum size of the family therefore oscillates between two and three." ('Family' in *Whither Mankind*, p. 223).

It is true of course that the figures which these two gentlemen had before them referred to England, and it may be readily admitted that for a long time to come the figures applicable to our country will have to be much larger here on account of the higher death-rate among children and grown-ups. I have not with me the necessary statistics for arriving at the figures applicable to India; but no figures are needed for realizing the need for birth-control even here. A woman in this country may have to give birth to four or five children instead of

three as in England; but certainly it would not be necessary for her to bear them by tens and twelves. If at present the population here does not leap to impossible proportions, it is only because of the terrific death-rate which prevails in this country. Not only is the country very poor and very backward economically and scientifically, not only is the general standard of life of the vast majority unspeakably low; but this standard is further lowered by the enormous sizes of families. In particular, such a fall in the standard of life implies that proper and sufficient nourishment, effective medical help, and education become unattainable benefits, with the result that far too many children die in infancy, and those that survive grow up to be weak, sickly, underfed and uneducated! Much of this unnecessary suffering of the children and their mothers could be entirely prevented by the simple adoption of birth-control. It can therefore be said confidently and without reservation that birth-control is essential not merely for the emancipation of the mother, but for the welfare of the child also.

As for the argument that for success in warfare man-power is essential, and that therefore nations should increase their populations, all that need be said is that every country cannot have as much man-power as every other. Neither Britain nor France, for example, can ever hope to support a population equal to that of the U. S. S. R. or the United States. The physical dimensions of the countries rule out such a possibility. It is therefore clear that not the increase of population, but formation of powerful alliances by means of prudent and far-sighted treaties is the way to survive in the struggle of nations.

Let us now consider 'the objection against birth-

control that since it is practised exclusively by the best section of the community, it will lead to a gradual elimination of genius and talent. This argument too is as inconclusive as the first. The facts which it describes are real; but the inference drawn from them is fallacious. It is true that today contraception is practised by the wealthy, educated classes mainly, and that the proportion of this class in the total population is falling. But it is wrong to conclude that therefore the intelligence and capacity of the country as a whole are also diminishing. There is no reason to suppose that talent is the monopoly of the rich, leisured classes only. In fact, there is overwhelming evidence proving the exact opposite. In the post-revolutionary Russia there has been such an unprecedented growth of talent out of even the humblest strata of society that the lie has been given to the mischievous doctrine of the superiority of the wealthy classes. It is however true that at the present time the native intelligence and talent of the children of the poor are doomed to remain undeveloped for want of proper education, and that therefore they are practically non-existent. But this merely means that we are foolishly wasting vast funds of creative capacity in our preoccupation with money and power, and it constitutes a powerful argument for a reconsideration of our scheme of values. Meanwhile the fortunate intelligent classes should not neglect to replace themselves in sufficiently large numbers; for birth-control certainly does not mean complete prevention of births, but merely prevention of unwanted births.

As for the argument that birth-control is practised by the 'higher' classes only, I have already granted this to be a fact; but it is not enough to point out the fact

without probing into its origin. The reason why birth-control is not practised by the poorer classes is their poverty, ignorance and superstitious beliefs. Most of them know little or nothing about contraception; and those who do, look upon it as a monstrosity, a wicked interference with God's design—a belief which is carefully and sedulously fostered by the guardians of faith. If in spite of these handicaps some men and women do desire to control births, they cannot afford the costly appliances, and they have to depend on the murderous herbs and drugs sold by quacks and scoundrels. No wonder that the poor do not practise birth-control! The proper thing to do therefore is not to complain that the poor are multiplying at a dangerous rate, but to educate them, raise their standard of life, and bring the scientific contraceptive appliances within their means. Then even the poor would bring fewer children into the world; for no very profound wisdom and learning are necessary for seeing that it is better to restrict births than to produce children by the dozen and then to watch them die of undernourishment and preventable diseases. I conclude therefore that the objections urged against the control of maternity are invalid and may be set aside.

### Maternity Allowance

The next objection is that against the maternity allowance. It argues in brief that such an allowance will do injustice to male workers; for it will be paid to women workers when they are not working. This, it is said, is clearly unfair. After all women accept maternity out of their own free choice and they derive satisfaction from it. It is only fair that they should be prepared to pay some price for a task which is freely chosen and which gives

satisfaction.

But a little thinking will show that this argument is based more upon jealousy than upon rational grounds. For if we remember that a woman need not (and in fact should not) bear more than three (or four or five) children, it will be clear that this allowance will have to be paid to women at the most four or five times; that is to say, in all a woman would get about sixteen months' salary free. Surely it is extravagant to suggest that this will be a great hardship on men! Besides we must never forget that bearing children, though pleasant and freely chosen, is a task which is socially very important; and its importance does not become less merely because it is self-imposed. Unfortunately this is rarely if ever realized, except when the population in a country begins to fall. In many European countries this phenomenon took place in the years following World War I, and then though the governments adopted the most extravagant measures to encourage birth-rate, it was in most cases impossible to persuade mothers to call their strike off. It is therefore only fair that society as a whole should pay the price for this service. Finally, we should also reflect that if we do not adopt this measure, we shall be unable to remove that dependence of women which is the worst enemy of the new type of family which is being born.

### Creches and Kindergartens for Children

Quite formidable-looking objections have been urged against the bringing up of children in creches and kindergartens. And since some of them have a great currency in this country, I think it is necessary to deal with them in some detail.

The main objection to the bringing up of children in

creches and kindergartens is that this will result in the loss of that close, profound and vital relationship between the child and the mother which is the soul alike of the true family life and of the proper education of the young, and that it is extremely undesirable that this relationship should be lost. In this connexion often a great many poetic and high-sounding words and phrases are employed for proving the great importance of mothers in the education of the young. It is argued, for example, that on women lies the responsibility of moulding the younger generation; and they could not possibly discharge this duty satisfactorily if they were to abandon their homes for jobs, and send their children to nurseries to be brought up by mercenary teachers. By leaving her home a woman may earn a little money; but we should (and she should) clearly realize the price we have to pay for those wretched coins. The education of the young is certainly one of the most important of social tasks; that it will not be done well by men and women working for a wage is too obvious to need proof. There can be no doubt that this 'reform' will result in the destruction of the family and with it of all that is good and noble in it. After all (it is said) human society can live on sacrifice alone, and Nature has chosen woman for that part. By effacing themselves women ought to help in creating a generation which will lead mankind forward towards the Ideal. Other learned gentlemen are reminded in this context of the magic word 'progress', and they triumphantly ask: "But what about progress? Will education of children in creches ensure progress?" The implied answer to this question is of course 'No'; for, it is argued, progress comes about only because of the extraordinary thoughts of extra-

ordinary men, and there will be no more any extraordinary men if we start collective education of children in nurseries. Collective education is bound to destroy individuality, and it will produce a society which may be neat and orderly perhaps, but will certainly be barren and unprogressive. Just as our factories produce cars and radio-sets by the hundred thousand, all exactly alike, so we shall soon be producing standardized minds, cast from one mould as it were. Is it necessary to prove, it will be asked, that this way lies Death?

Such arguments are certainly eloquently composed and powerfully delivered; but for that very reason it is essential that we separate in them those parts which are meant to appeal to reason from those which merely play upon our passions. When such an analysis is carried out it will appear that arguments like the above contain little that is really reasonable, and that this little is too weak to prove their conclusion.

Let us first consider the objection that if the education of children is 'collectivized', the soul will disappear from that intimate and vital relationship which exists between the mother and her children. That this argument totally misrepresents the facts and is utterly false will be amply clear if we compare the present condition which prevails in this country with that which may be expected to come about after the reforms here suggested are introduced. The women in the present-day Indian society can be broadly classified into three classes; (1) *the working class wives* who have not only to look after their household, but also to work for about six to eight (and sometimes even more) hours outside their homes; (2) *the middle class wives* who do not have to work outside their homes for wage, but have to do the house-

keeping themselves; and (3) *the rich men's wives* who don't have to work either at home or outside. Let us now enquire how children are looked after by their mothers in each of these three classes.

The wives of rich men don't have to, and in most cases, do not look after their own children. They are looked after by ayahs. Many women do not even suckle their own babies. Even during the night the children do not sleep with their mothers; they sleep apart in cradles or in separate beds. No doubt their mothers play with them for some time every day, and some even take them for evening walks actually pushing the 'prams' themselves. But there they draw the line. We cannot then say that in this class the children are cared for by their mothers. And yet we have not heard any complaints about the decline in the capacities of this class.

The middle-class women have to look after their children themselves out of economic necessity. (It should be remembered here that by the 'middle class' in India we mean the class which is only a shade removed from the wage-earning class, and which differs from it only in earning a salary instead of a wage.) Because of the slenderness of means, servants cannot be employed for any work except washing of utensils and clothes. But though these two are generally done by servants, cooking and general house-keeping which have to be done by the housewife leave her hardly any time to attend to her children. These have to be cared for mostly by their elder sisters, and in their absence, by elder brothers.

The conditions in the working classes are of course terrible. What with cooking, washing, sewing and generally managing a household of anything from six to twelve



persons, the housewife rarely has any time even to fondle and caress her children, let alone educate them. In many cases, she either puts the child to sleep with a dose of opium or else gives it in the charge of her elder daughter who is herself little more than a child; for as soon as she is six or seven years of age, she has to go out for work with her mother. It is then a plain, literal truth to say that in this class—and this class contains the vast majority of our population—there is total absence of the care of the young.

Now contrast with this nightmare the picture of a society in which the reforms suggested here have been adopted. For one thing, in such a society, not a few children only, but absolutely all children, irrespective of the economic status of their parents, will be looked after and educated by trained nurses and teachers. They will breathe fresh air, play in clean play-grounds, be given the newest types of toys and play-things, play the newest games invented, and learn to live a co-operative life of mutual aid in the formative period of their lives. That this appears to us alarming and undesirable merely proves that we have become hysterical in our fear of losing our power! Secondly, no child will have to remain in the creche or kindergarten for more than eight hours during its mother's working day and even during these eight hours its mother will be able to meet it twice or thrice and feed it. It is therefore very far-fetched to suggest that the use of creches will result in the neglect of children on the part of mothers. Thirdly, after their eight-hour work, women would have complete leisure. All household work having become socialized under the present scheme, she will not have to cook or wash or sew after her return from work. Contrast with this the

present state of affairs where no woman has any spare time of her own which she can devote with a carefree mind to her children. But if socialization is introduced, then after her eight-hour work (for which she will receive a wage or a salary) she will be completely free to do what she chooses, and among others things, to look after her children. It is therefore clear that far from being the case that children will suffer under the scheme here proposed, quite to the contrary, this scheme provides the best opportunities for the proper care of the young. I think one can even go farther and state it as a plain fact, to be literally understood, that *a proper care of the young is really impossible under any other scheme that has ever been proposed*. It is an incontrovertible fact that no woman can both manage the household and look after the children. The scheme here outlined frees her from the household work by socializing that work. True, she will even then have to work at some task for about eight hours; but the scheme also provides for the proper care of her children during her hours of work. And this benefit is extended by the scheme to *all* women and *all* their children, and not merely to a handful of lucky women and their fortunate sons and daughters. For this reason, those who see in the proposed reforms a danger to our children, should stop and think for a cool moment whether this is really so.

A word now about the objection that the education of children from early age in creches will result in the standardization of minds. A part of the answer to this objection is already contained in the above paragraph. For even if it is admitted that creches will encourage uniformity of thought and behaviour, every mother will have ample time outside her working hours to encourage

distinctive traits in her children. But a moment's reflection will show clearly that this argument too has been concocted to deceive the unwary and unsuspecting. For so long as there are more students than teachers (and this will always be the case), in a sense, education is bound to be uniform. This may be undesirable; but beyond a certain limit it cannot be avoided. Besides it is not as if education in creches is specially subject to this short-coming, while other forms of education are immune from it. Uniformity in education may be a grave danger; I do not deny that it is. All I wish to maintain is that creches are not specially susceptible to this defect. If this defect in other educational methods can be counteracted by carefully chosen means there is no reason why the same should not be possible in creches also. Actually the methods recommended by Madame Montessori to be used in nurseries are the very opposite of the Nazi methods of standardization of intelligence!

## V. CERTAIN OBJECTIONS ANSWERED (*Contd.*)

### *Socialization of Household Work—Divorce*

In the last chapter we dealt with the objections made against the reforms intended to counteract the evil effects of maternity on women's status in society. But as we have seen uncontrolled maternity is only one of the many causes of the inequality of the sexes, and the institution of the patriarchal family is another formidable and powerful enemy of their equality. Among the remedies suggested against some of the evil features of the patriarchal family we have mentioned: (1) socializa-

tion of household work as the only means of setting woman free from the drudgery of house-keeping, and (ii) divorce. Both these have been vehemently attacked by the advocates of the *status quo*, and it is therefore necessary to defend these against their attacks.

### Socialization of Household Work

Some of the strangest and the most ridiculous objections have been urged against this measure which I have endeavoured to show to be the only possible way in which women can be set free from household drudgery. I once listened to a lecture delivered by a learned lady on the harm that socialization is likely to do. In particular she was trying to show how harmful collective cooking is going to be. Socialized cooking will mean, she said, collective cooking for hundreds of persons in one kitchen, instead of separate cooking for each family in each household. But will not this, she asked, reduce the home to a kind of a hostel? At an appointed hour the family will walk to the nearest boarding-house, or else food will be sent home from the collective kitchens. Will not this deprive our homes of that homeliness which is so very precious? Besides we shall be completely at the mercy of the management of the kitchen; we shall have to eat not what we want, but what is served. "Suppose now that your child, (this to about a hundred college-going girls) some day asks for something which is not in the day's menu, will that not be unfortunate?" Certainly madam, it will be very unfortunate and even sad; but then such sad and unfortunate things will always occur where children are concerned. Children have been known to cry for the moon, let alone aeroplanes and motor-cars, chocolates and candy; the wise mother always

gets round these tight corners with a little tact. But even if we suppose this circumstance to be extremely unfortunate, to be avoided if we can, must we forget the thing called 'sense of proportion'? It would certainly be a great pity if your son asked for something, and you were powerless to satisfy the little one's desire because of the collective kitchen; but consider the incomparably greater pity of the entire female sex bound for life to the kitchen in the absence of collectivized cooking! In this connexion, it is very significant that these objectors belong mostly to the rich, leisured classes; and for the most part these ladies naturally (alas, too naturally) think of their own classes only. These classes can afford a large number of servants for household work, and the women in these classes can rarely imagine the slavery of the working-class wives and the misery of their utterly neglected children. I remember many college-going girls once arguing with me on this point. They said they would employ cooks for cooking food and ayahs for looking after their children: was there really any need for the unseemly innovation of collectivization? I admitted readily that it solved the problem for their class which could afford cooks and ayahs; but I reminded them that there were also millions of poor women who could not employ cooks and ayahs, and asked what they proposed to do about *them*. It came as a revelation to these young ladies that the problem did not concern only a very small minority, but the entire womenfolk of the country. I am afraid however that it is very rarely that the problem is considered in this wider setting; but unless we do so consider it, our thought will totally lack perspective and realism. It must be always remembered that our problem is to evolve a scheme under which

*every* woman, whatever her class or the income of her husband, could become free and be able to live a self-respecting and respectable life of a free and responsible member of society. I submit with due deference to the learned elders who think differently that there is only one way in which this can be done consistently with the ideals of the good life, and that is the way outlined here. There is no other way!

To tell the truth, I have never been able to understand clearly what is meant by the objection that socialization of cooking will reduce the home to a hostel, and I have always felt that it is merely an expression of that antagonism which all men feel towards anything which is new and strange. If collectivization of washing and of sewing has not wrecked our homes, I do not see why collectivization of cooking should. Evidently it is felt that cooking the husband's and children's food oneself is the best, if not the only, way in which a woman's affection for her husband and children can be expressed. That it is one of the ways in which that affection may be expressed may be granted at once; but whether it is the only way, or even the best way, is very doubtful. I cannot help feeling that that affection can be much better expressed by co-operating in gathering knowledge, creating and appreciating art, or doing some other socially important work. The Webbs and the Curies (to name only two of such devoted great couples) were so deeply in love with each other and their personalities had so completely merged together, that they practically became one person. Meanwhile if women should still prize that other crude form of expression of their affection, let them reflect upon the enormous price they have to pay for it. That price is nothing less than the freedom which makes

us human beings, and without which we are scarcely distinguishable from brutes. Learning to put first things first is here as elsewhere the soul of wisdom.

## Divorce

We come next to the thorny problem of divorce. Much has been said about this subject in recent years, and it will not therefore be necessary to deal with the question at length.

Disregarding in these objections the militant defence by husbands of their rule which is jeopardized by the reform of divorce, let us try to consider coolly what can be reasonably said against it. The objection against divorce which has seemed gravest both to its opponents and advocates is that it will destroy the institution of family. I am going to devote a whole chapter to a consideration of the family in relation to the emancipation of women, so I shall say nothing about it here. The next gravest difficulty pointed out by the opponents of divorce is the problem of the children of the divorced parents. Can a satisfactory arrangement be made for the proper upbringing of these unlucky children, it is asked. It is argued that divorce will not only cause great hardships to the children of divorced couples, but it will also have an adverse effect upon the healthy growth of the child-mind.

I think that this objection can be answered satisfactorily as follows. It may be admitted that the divorce of parents is not a particularly desirable thing from the point of view of the proper mental growth of children; but I submit that it is better (or less bad) than all the other alternative courses possible. For one thing, what is proper and what is improper as regards the education

of the young is a question largely of mental habits. In the West it is customary for husbands and wives to embrace and kiss each other in the presence of their children; but we should regard it extremely undesirable if husbands and wives followed a similar practice here. And yet if we think about the matter coolly and in a judicious spirit, we shall have to admit that it is impossible to give an unqualified judgement either in favour of or against the Western or the Eastern custom, because, as I have said above, it is largely a question of mental habits. In the West children become used to watching their parents embrace and kiss from early childhood, and so they come to look upon these as matters of course, like talking to and seeing each other; but to us who are brought up in a more puritan atmosphere it appears unnatural. An unfamiliar mode of behaviour is apt to appear to men not only strange, but perverse and immoral; but a few years' familiarity is enough to transform it into a respectable custom.

But I think it is possible to say something much more positive about the goodness or badness of customs. Just because our judgements about customs are governed by our mental habits, it need not be said that therefore given certain habits, all customs are equally good. Actually some customs may be quite undesirable. In this connexion, I think, an important rule can be laid down concerning the education of the young; and it is that this education should be as far as possible realistic, that is to say, there should be no escapism in it, no discreet concealment of the seamy side of things. We all know how Siddartha was kept by his father completely in the dark about the evils of life; but those evils have a way of forcing themselves upon us through little chinks in



our spiritual armours. And when they did so in the case of Siddartha, he was unequal to them. The whole world became to him a void, meaning nothing. If he had known disease, old age and death to be only matters of course, it is probable that the sight of old age and death would not have unbalanced him, and the world would have been saved from a defeatist metaphysic. The stern realities of life cannot be concealed for ever, nor is it proper to try to conceal them; for they do not disappear by being concealed. Only in facing them and in accepting them as inevitable or endeavouring to change them lies wisdom and the possibility of making life a success.

From this point of view, if a man and his wife have ceased to love each other for some reason, it is extremely doubtful whether concealment of this fact and the consequent repression of the feelings of the parents will be on the whole beneficial to the child. For in such a family, even though the husband and the wife may not actually separate, the fact that they have ceased to love each other must often appear in their behaviour. The continuous differences of opinion, bickerings, not being on talking terms, raised voices—these and similar scenes cannot be avoided in most cases; and often surreptitious adultery is practised. It is evident that these do not constitute ideal surroundings for a child of tender age. For these reasons, I think that when we have thought over the matter coolly and without passion, we shall find that here as elsewhere in human relationship, more is to be gained by generosity, frankness and fair-play than by envy, hatred, repressions and clandestine ways.

“But how are you going to arrange for the upbringing of these unfortunate children?”, it might still be asked. To my mind this question is easily answered. If the wife

is economically independent, a perfectly simple arrangement would be possible. The responsibility of educating and bringing up children could then be shared by both parents. Things would be a little more difficult in those cases where the wife is economically dependent upon her husband. As has already been remarked, the full benefits of divorce cannot be secured without also establishing the economic independence of women. Where the wife is dependent on her husband, he has to continue to support her even after she divorces him, and this naturally seems unfair to him. The question: "With whom should the children stay?", can also be answered fairly easily. The parents can settle this between themselves amicably. Even if they have been unable to live together, it is not necessary that they should part as enemies. If they learn to take a healthy and generous attitude towards the problem, they will certainly be able to settle this question of the guardianship of children in a reasonable and civilized manner. But if in any case, they have not even this much decency left in them, the law-courts will have to decide the matter. But it is to be hoped that with the spread of education and a realistic outlook on life's problems, parents will not generally bring matters to this pass!

Now if we set aside for a moment this exaggerated difficulty presented by the children of divorced parents, and think of the matter dispassionately, we will easily see how indispensable divorce is for a healthy and happy married life. Men and women are but fallible creatures; and they remain mere human beings even after they are married. They are bound to make mistakes now and then in the choice of a partner; and these mistakes will as a general rule be always discovered too late. It is there-

fore unrealistic to suppose that husbands and wives will love each other for ever in all cases. As Mr. Shaw has put it in his brilliant, direct and incisive manner:

There is no hocus pocus that can possibly be devised with rings and veils and vows and benedictions that can fix either a man's or a woman's affection for twenty minutes, much less twenty years. Even the most affectionate couples must have moments during which they are far more conscious of one another's faults than of one another's attractions. . . . Those who talk and write and legislate as if all this could be prevented by making solemn vows that it shall not happen, are either insincere, insane, or hopelessly stupid.

(Prefaces, "Getting Married", p. 21).

In many families (alas, in too many of them!) the affection of the husband and the wife vanishes, and apathy and even positive hatred take its place. This is a hard fact from which there is no escape; it has been proved hundreds of thousands of times in every age and country. Now it is essential to realize that in all such cases the marriage-relation does really disappear. The true basis of marriage can only be love, willing consent and co-operation; where these have disappeared, the *raison d'être* of marriage has vanished too. To refuse to dissolve such unions is to base them on force and hatred. That this is barbarous, unjust and undesirable is, I submit, self-evident. Men and women marry for the sake of happiness, for fulfilling themselves and each other. If this purpose is defeated, if marriage results in misery and void, it is not marriage at all, but a savage monstrosity masquerading as marriage. It is only proper that what has disappeared in fact should also disappear by

law. There is one more very important thing to be remembered in this connexion. No cultured, educated, self-respecting person would wish to keep forcibly bound to him (or her) another person who is not willing to stay with him (or her). I for my part cannot dream of such a thing. The marriage-tie is so tender and delicate that it cannot stand any kind of bullying. A love, freely and unreservedly given, is its very breath; it cannot survive for a moment between individuals who have ceased to care for each other. We must therefore pronounce the indissoluble marriage a monstrous institution.

Why is it then that such a disgraceful and degrading institution is tolerated and even actively defended in our society? The answer is, partly because of conservatism, partly because of male selfishness, and partly because of a fear of social disasters which are bound to result (we are assured) if it is given up. Though evil, it is tolerated as necessary for the good of the society as a whole. Among such threatened disasters the one most feared is the destruction of the family, and with it of civilization itself. Let us therefore now turn to this question.

## VI. THE EMANCIPATED FAMILY

We come at last to the dreaded subject of the family. I have deferred treatment of this question not only because it occupies a privileged position in the armoury of the opposition, being treated in fact as the ace of trumps against which no defence is possible, and therefore deserving privileged treatment, but also because our treatment of other objections to emancipation has largely prepared us for understanding the full importance

of the objection based on family. It will be soon clear that every one of the measures defended in the foregoing pages deals a blow to the institution of family as it exists today; and it is therefore a general objection to all those reforms that they will undermine the family. Now it is argued that since all culture and civilization is based on the family and is impossible without it, these too will speedily disappear after the emancipation of women. For if the family disappears, promiscuity, and unchecked licence must result. All social stability will be lost and human life will soon sink to the level of the brute.

This objection appears very real and formidable at first sight. For, it is perfectly true that the reforms here outlined and defended are all inimical to the family in its present form. If women get a social status equal to men's, by law and in fact, man's mastery will disappear as a matter of course. Once she is economically independent, no woman will tolerate the rule of the husband. Facilities of divorce will enable her to get unpleasant marriages dissolved. Birth-control and the socialization of the care of the young will free her from the necessity of spending her whole life in bearing children and bringing them up, as at present. Finally, socialization of household work will free her from the slavery of the home and enable her to develop her own individuality and to rise from the status of a serf to that of a free and responsible member of society. That all these will break up the patriarchal family is too plain to require elaborate explanation.

But if it is true, it will be said, that the family will not survive the emancipation of women, it is also true that civilized society will not survive the disappearance

of the family, for the family occupies a very vital position in human life. The period of childhood in men is much longer than in all other animals; so the human children require parental protection and care for a very much longer period than the young ones of the lower animals. Besides, the instinctive endowment of men is much poorer than that of the lower animals; and so they have to learn many things which the latter know by instinct. This protection and this education the human children get in the family, and it will be difficult to devise another institution which will do this task equally well. It is not impossible to bring up and educate children collectively, as Plato suggested; but whether it is really practicable is doubtful, and besides it is certain that it will produce a generation of men and women from which free thinking will gradually disappear. In the family the children receive individual attention and an opportunity for natural growth. The parents do not regard their children as things to be moulded after a pattern, as a Platonic teacher is bound to do, but rather as living things whose growth is to be solicitously fostered in the direction of their own natural bent. Further, in the family alone can be realized some extremely valuable relations of filial and parental affection. But this is not all. Among the things accounted greatly valuable by moralists is included the spontaneous and constant love of men and women. In a loveless union the physical needs may perhaps be satisfied, but some of our deepest psychological needs will remain starved. Among other things, there is in us all a mysterious but driving desire to give our all to someone else, and to love him (or her) with a boundless love. Only so do we fulfil ourselves completely. Where this fulfilment is to be possible, there the family

will have to be both monogamous and permanent. Such a monogamous, permanent family is the ideal of human union towards which we ought to move, even if with faltering and fitful steps.

All this must be admitted to be true. But if so, does it not prove that the family is a vital part of civilized society and must be preserved at all costs? Does it not follow that if emancipation of women is inimical to family, it is emancipation and not the family which must be given up?

I believe that the answer to the above question is "No", and the reasons for this are as follows. By the term "family" is meant an institution which may take various forms, and not in all of these are the true objects of family-life equally realized. Consider, for example, the prevalent form of the family today, *viz.* the patriarchal. As has already been shown, it is based on the rule of fathers, and involving the subjection of women. It came into existence in the childhood of mankind, when might was the only right that anybody recognized; and it did help the progress of the human species by providing opportunities of self-development to half the population (*viz.* men)—even if at the cost of the other half. At the cost of the other half—aye, there is the rub! At the cost of not only the mothers in the family—the younger mothers of course: the mother of the patriarch, like all slaves raised to the position of masters, becomes a more terrible tyrant than ever a free master can be—but all the females in it; the girl-child, the growing daughter, the marriageable woman, all were equally to be sacrificed to the "mighty" male. No need to say then that the ideal of the family which has just been defined, and the objects which have been shown to be the *raison d'être* of married

life are totally defeated in the patriarchal family. There cannot be much co-operation, far less real self-effacing love, in a relation which involves the mastery of one partner over the other. Where the relation is one of master and slave, there sacrifice of the narrow self for the sake of the other is impossible!

We must then remember that the patriarchal form is only one of the forms which the family can take, and that therefore, it is wrong to suggest that if this form of it were to disappear, the family itself would disappear too. Because it may be that the family may assume some other new form, and perhaps this new form may be better suited for the proper purpose of family life. It may be that the ideal of family life will be more completely realized in this new form.

Now I wish to suggest and argue that this is in fact the case. If the patriarchal family goes, there is no reason to suppose that society will become family-less. There are good reasons to suppose that out of the ashes of the present family a new family will be born, which will not only provide equal freedom to men and women, but also possess a stability which will be (amply sufficient) for progress. And this now I shall proceed to show.

### Can the Family be based on Equality?

Now it is generally denied that the family could ever be based on equality. It is argued that no concerted action is possible on the part of a group of persons unless one of them orders and the rest obey. In an association—of men, women, or mixed—if all are equal, it is unlikely that they will always agree on all things, and so co-operative action would become practically impossible. It is the same, it is said, with the family. If both the husband



and the wife had equal rights, then every passing disagreement might develop into a crisis and no family could hold out for long under this constant strain. It is therefore, essential that the family be based on the rule of one of the partners. This may be unpleasant, but it is necessary; and while ignorance of this truth may be pardonable in visionary young poets, it would be unpardonable in responsible leaders of society.

But let us point out to these wise men, since they always forget, or at least never show signs of remembering, that we are here dealing with an association which is quite unlike any other association of humans. The family, whatever shape or form it may have, has a binding force, namely the marriage-tie, the like of which no other association of humans can have. The marriage-tie is different from all other relations, more intimate and more vital. There is no room in it for any kind of force or coercion. I shall not, of course, make the foolish assertion that there will never be any disagreements between married people. Disagreements there are bound to be. But I do maintain that if men and women enter the marriage-relation after careful thought, with a sufficient knowledge of the rules of the game and an earnest intention to obey those rules, they will certainly be able in most cases to overcome their differences peacefully and amicably. It is needless to say that this new kind of family is possible only where marriage is based on love; and it will also pre-suppose a preliminary period of mutual understanding gone through before marriage is actually entered into. It is impossible in the present circumstances where most marriages are arranged between boys and girls who have never met each other before, or (even if they have met)

have had no training in the science and art of family life. After all married life is an all-important subject; it must be studied like a science and practised like an art. It will not be asking too much to hope that in the days to come boys and girls will be taught to treat this relationship with fitting seriousness, giving the matter a sufficient amount of earnest attention. If this preliminary course is generally gone through, it may be reasonably hoped that on the whole marriages will take place between mutually suitable partners and may therefore, be expected to endure as a rule. There would doubtless be unsuccessful unions even with the most careful choosing; and these then would have to be dissolved by divorce.

### Divorce not Hostile to Marriage

But even if we admit that there will be a few cases in which the family will tend to be dissolved, it does not follow that the institution of the family will disappear. The marriages which are dissolved are clearly those which are ill-assorted; and we have seen that it is only proper that such marriages should be declared null and void. Men often commit mistakes, and it is especially easy to commit them when one is young and in the grip of a violent passion like that of sex. It is not surprising therefore that many couples discover too late that they are ill-matched. If such ill-matched, unhappy marriages are enforced, there might be stability in society, but there will be little love in it and even less happiness. It is therefore, essential to provide the facility of divorce as a corrective against these very natural mistakes. But divorce does not merely dissolve ill-assorted unions; it also brings about better and lasting marriages. For it provides to men and women opportunities of marrying

again, armed with hard-earned wisdom. Thus though the immediate result of divorce is the dissolution of marriage, its ultimate result is a better, wiser and probably a lasting marriage. It is therefore, wrong to think of divorce as hostile to the family; it is in fact favourable to it.

### Will not Divorce be Abused?

But this will not be enough to reassure those who see in the emancipation of women only the beginnings of the disintegration of the family. They ask whether there is any reason to suppose that men and women will not abuse the facility of divorce. Granting that having divorced a former husband or wife, a woman or a man will marry again, will this not result in the frequency of short-lived unions, repeated divorces and the ultimate disappearance of a stable, lasting family?

That this fear is largely alarmist and baseless can be shown on general theoretical grounds and by appeal to actual experience. What the objectors fear is that men and women will enter into trivial, short-lived relations, make merry and separate again. Now, it is true that brutes behave like this and that many men and women too tend to follow them; but it is unlikely that a cultured and educated human being will act in this manner. Certainly the reforms defended here will have to be accompanied by a large extension of proper education; and given this education, I submit that we need not fear the kind of orgies that the objectors have in mind.

This is not a mere pious hope. It has a solid foundation in actual experience. In the U.S.S.R. divorce is very easy, and though in the U.S.A. it is not as easy as in the U.S.S.R., it can yet be obtained more easily than

in most other countries. But the experiences of both these countries are very far from being alarming.\* The Russian experiment is even more heartening. Though in Russia a divorce could be had practically for the asking by any one party, the proportion of divorce to marriages was even lower than in the United States. The reason of course, is that the Russians are serious and earnest about life and so practise self-control instead of dissipating themselves. The Russian young men and women are taught to regard life as a mission, as indeed it ought to be regarded, and they dedicate themselves to their cause without thinking over much of their own pleasures. A similar education is bound to have a similar steadying effect on the youth here. I submit therefore that it is not too optimistic to hope that divorce will prove a genuine help to the family, rather than a destructive force.

### But will there be a Family at all?

All that you say may be true, I can hear our objector say, but it does not alter the fact that the emancipation of women will destroy the family. Economic independence will make it unnecessary for women to depend on men. The use of contraceptives will enable them to prevent pregnancy as long as they might wish; and even if children are born, these will not feel the need of the father because of the economic independence of the mother. It

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\*For example, in the United States where the worst abuses of divorce are popularly supposed to be practised, the following were the figures in 1935, which was the peak year for divorces, for the largest number of divorces so far (1944) had been granted in that year. The number of marriages in that year was 1,327,000 and the number of divorces 218,000. Marriages were 10.41 per 1000 of population, and divorces 1.71 per 1000 of population, or 16.4 per 100 marriages.

seems therefore, probable that an ever smaller number of women will marry as time goes on; and if this is true, does not the family run the danger of gradual extinction?

Now it may be admitted that this fear is not altogether baseless; but I am afraid that it is easy to exaggerate it. For even after all conceivable allowances have been made to the destructive elements so far enumerated, there stands out the solid, irreducible fact that the roots of the family lie deep in human nature. It is human nature (and no mere custom) which prompts men and women to unite and found families; and that human nature may be safely trusted to see that families are founded as long as there are human beings. Men and women are incomplete without each other; their desire for each other is not something man-made, but natural. Similarly, the affection which parents feel for their offspring is also a part of the deepest human instincts. Without children neither men nor women feel their life full, or their experience enriched to its utmost limits. A childless union temporarily entered into, might satisfy the shallow natures in hot youth; but with the passing of youth the desire for the deeper union with life's partner and the longing for children make their appearance. For this reason, it can, I think, be safely asserted that the best safeguard of the family is to be found in human nature itself, and all fears concerning its future safety may be set aside as panicky and largely baseless.

### **The Emancipated Family**

And yet it will be only realistic and honest to admit and face a few things. It cannot be denied that the use of contraceptives and the economic independence of women will tend to increase both sexual relations out-

side marriage and children born out of wedlock. But for the reasons already given it may be said with considerable assurance that such cases will be exceptional in spite of their increase. Further it must be borne in mind that no power, legal or moral, can eradicate completely the extra-marital sexual relations and children born outside marriage. In spite of all the laws and customs to the contrary, they have existed at all times and in all places. The only result which legal or customary prohibition has produced is that these practices have been driven underground and have thriven subterraneously, and the punishment for such conduct has been borne almost exclusively by the unfortunate women concerned and their "illegitimate" children. It is therefore, going to be much more beneficial not to regard extra-marital sexual relations and offsprings as sinful and in some way inferior to the relations and children inside marriage. We must therefore remove all restrictions and disabilities from such relations. We should remember that after all a true family is not something which can be saved and kept alive by force or law. A true family is that in which there is a union of hearts, where personalities merge into each other, where the husband and the wife love each other with a truly religious devotion. Only such a family deserves to be saved! But such a family can be neither created nor saved by force. Force might succeed in bringing bodies together; it cannot unite souls. Only one thing possesses the magic power of producing that miracle unknown elsewhere in nature—the union of two souls, and that is freely given love. A family built on the foundation of this love is built on rock; it need fear no attack. It is deathless! No power on earth can destroy it. While there is culture and education, while men and

women appreciate the value of intrinsic goods like affection and devotion, such a family will live and prosper foursquare to all the evil winds that may blow! A permanent, monogamous family is indeed the ideal of mankind; but this ideal cannot be attained by penalizing extramarital love and denying divorce. A family based on these restrictions may appear monogamous and permanent; but in reality it will be a dead, lifeless mechanism. Its soul will have fled, for it scorns to live in a habitat where blustering fools and bullies rule. Where there is no freedom, there is no love. Such a family is savage: civilization will not gain by our trying to save it!

### **Will the Emancipated Society be Stable?**

One last objection and we take leave of the objectors. The freedom I have defended in these pages, it will be said, is all very nice to talk grandly about. But will the society be stable if all this freedom is allowed to men and women? Will not that freedom rather undermine every kind of stabilizing influence and pave the way for social anarchy? It might bring some passing pleasures to this or the next generation; but will it bring lasting happiness to the human society?

Now I shall confess to a certain inability in understanding this objection which is certainly regarded as very powerful by the defenders of the existing order. Very few people ever try to express it in clear terms, and no doubt they are wise in this; for it seems to me to be one of those arguments which appear powerful in proportion as they are vaguely and obscurely worded, making analysis and criticism difficult. However, it may be, I shall try to give an answer which appears to me to be amply sufficient to meet the argument as I understand it.

Now to begin with, it is, I think, amply clear that by "stability" we cannot possibly mean changelessness or preservation of the *status quo*; for not only is it impossible for human society to be changeless, but no one today—not even the most conservative—will defend the perpetual preservation of the existing order of things. That human society has gone on changing ceaselessly has been established beyond a shadow of doubt; and besides it is only in this changeable character of society that lie the roots of progress. The stability of society which is prized so much cannot then mean a state like the hibernation of some lower animals, during which society will merely vegetate. Such a deathlike life is not worth living. But if by "stability" is not meant this, what is it that is meant? I think that by saying that society should be stable can be meant only this, that there should be in it at all times a sufficiently large proportion of men and women who prize the intrinsically valuable things which alone make life noble and worth living, and who are willing to sacrifice their all in defending them. That truth, beauty, happiness, and self-less love are good in themselves has already been shown. If a sufficient number of men and women can always be found to create and defend these things and place them highest among life's gifts for others to seek and follow, then it can be safely and definitely asserted that that society will be stable and progressive. It may contain much abuse of liberty; it may often be rocked by revolutions; many other apparently undesirable events may cloud its history; but civilization will be safe there and grow. And it is certain that this stability will be present in a society based upon the kind of family I have defended in the foregoing pages. The coming of the equality of the sexes may result in a larger number of



divorces, extra-marital love and children born out of wedlock; that is to say, according to our present standards, there will be licence there. But after all, the ultimate criterion of all morality is its capacity to foster good and eliminate evil. That a large part of the morality of the present society which is based on inequality of many kinds produces an enormous amount of preventable evil, has been shown over and over again by social reformers. If the morality of the coming age of equality and freedom is going to produce more good and eliminate more evil than at present, then that age, though apparently lax and immoral, will in reality be more moral. That this superior morality can come about only after the establishment of the equality of men and women is what I have endeavoured to show. And this, I submit, is the strongest argument that can or need be offered in defence of that equality!

## VII. IS IT UTOPIAN?

There is a certain type of reader who, if he can help it, will not read this book, or if he has allowed himself to be lured into reading it, has become bored to death by now. He prides himself on his "rugged common sense", calls himself a "realist", and scorns "visionary stuff". He will have followed this argument with a large number of yawns, and only politeness must have prevented him from interrupting us long ago and asking us to stop this foolish twaddle. But now that I have myself declared my argument complete, he will come forward and no longer restrained by considerations of politeness, will express himself in some such words as follows:

All this is very nice, he will say. It sounds grand, noble and exciting. But is it not a little bit too unrealistic? Is it not visionary and poetic? Do you really mean to say, he will ask, that all these grand reforms can be brought about here in this god-forsaken land—here where literacy is less than 10 per cent, where poverty stalks the country unchecked; where a square meal is a utopian dream for the majority of the people; where reading and writing are rare commodities, rarer than precious stones; where men and women are conservative beyond all measure? True, much of this is actually being put into practice in the West and in particular in Soviet Russia; but after all India is not Russia. Granting that what has been described here at great length is the ideal which we are to pursue, it must be admitted that there is not the ghost of a chance of our reaching it in the near future. Would it not therefore be more worthwhile to dream a little less, face the facts a little more, in short, be realistic and suggest a plan of action which could be put into practice today and some tangible result obtained? Socialism, socialization of household work, a family based on consent and love—are not all these mere beautiful dreams in a country which is unspeakably poor, unimaginably benighted, torn by fierce internal discord, and ruled by militant conservatism?

In these words the objection was placed before me by a friend, who was otherwise in general sympathy with the line of thought taken and the programme outlined; and there is little doubt that it will be present in the minds of many readers of this book. Without an answer to this last objection the case here made cannot therefore be supposed to be complete. I shall therefore proceed to give what I consider to be a sufficient answer to this

objection. It is in brief this: first, even if the programme proposed in these pages were visionary, it would still have its value in the complete discussion of the problem of women; but secondly, it is *not* true that it is visionary, meaning thereby something impracticable or impossible.

At the beginning of this essay it has been said that in dealing with any social problem it is of the utmost importance first to clarify to ourselves the ends which we are seeking; for only then will there be a reasonable chance of our finding the correct means for their achievement. Now in the matter of choosing ends it is essential always to aim high, to fix our attention upon ends which are lofty and in a sense ultimate. By aiming at a low thing, we cannot really achieve even that; for we fail to see its place in the total scheme of values. As Browning has expressed it in that fantastic poem, "Grammarians' Funeral":

Image the whole, then execute the parts——

Fancy the fabric

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,  
Ere mortar dab brick!

By aiming at a small result of immediate value, we may gain something which may have no value at all. But if we aim high, though we may not achieve all that we aim at, we are bound to gain much that is very valuable. Even our failures become edifying. To quote Browning again:

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,

Bad is our bargain!

Even were it then the case that the kind of society I have described here as desirable is an ideal which we

shall never reach, I suggest that to describe it clearly is still essential, for then we shall know at least whither our path lies. Our progress towards that ideal may be slow and intermittent; but so long as our eyes are fixed upon it, it is unlikely that we shall go astray, and our every step will take us nearer that ideal. Too many men today—both great and small—have a very narrow and inadequate conception of the ideal in this subject. Most men think that if we were to teach women to read and write and did not beat them quite as often as we do at present, all would be well. Such narrow, short-sighted conceptions are symptoms of a social and political myopia with which we are afflicted: they prove an utter lack of imagination on the part of the majority of men in this country. But after all without imagination there cannot be any pursuit of the Ideal. For, as Browning said, "A man's reach should always exceed his grasp—or what's a heaven for?" We must remember that if Socialism was established in Russia in 1919 or is being introduced into England today, that is only because certain visionaries and unpractical "fools" like Owen and Marx offered Socialism as a desirable and a possible state of society a hundred years ago, when socialism was "utopian", "visionary" stuff; but it is only because it was clearly conceived and boldly given to the world *then* that it is becoming a reality *now*. There can be little doubt that in the matter of women too a time will soon come when we in India shall be able to put into action the programme which today seems little better than a beautiful dream.

But secondly, I deny that the programme I have sketched is one which cannot be put into practice in the near future. Much of it has already been achieved in the

Soviet Union; and what they have done we certainly can do. It is true that we do not yet possess the power of the Soviets; but there are indications that we might soon possess it. Political freedom has at last been won, and the country is now faced with a choice between socialism and capitalism, unless we intend to grope blindly towards the ideal through blood and tears for a hundred years. When we make that choice, which may not be very far, let us not be caught unawares. Let us be prepared with a plan, complete in details, ready to be introduced into the moral anarchy which prevails today. This may have to be done at no very distant date. Let us be prepared for it when the great day dawns!

### VIII. WHAT WE CAN DO

But even before that great day dawns when the State in this country will proceed to legislate in order to establish the equality of men and women, there is much which we individuals can and must do. After all what a Government does only reflects the aspirations of those who put it there. A bill proposing the liberation of women will not drop from heaven like a gift from the gods; it can only come as a fruit of the thoughts planted in the soil of public opinion and grown into a mighty tree. That soil has to be yet prepared; the tender plant has to be solicitously nursed. What can we as individuals do towards that task?

First, we who are convinced of the rightness of the cause must spread these ideas by means of speech and writing among the people of the country and familiarize them. These ideas today arouse opposition by their

novelty: their value and usefulness are suspect because of their strangeness. That edge of strangeness must be worn off by constant discussion at home, in schools and colleges, in public meetings, in imaginative literature and in the cinema. Once people are persuaded that these reforms are desirable, half the battle is won.

Secondly, enlightened men and women can begin to execute the programme right away in their own homes. Enlightened fathers should treat their daughters and sons alike, and bring the former up to believe that economic self-dependence is something which is indispensable for a decent, self-respecting life. Emancipated women should utilize their superior opportunities and talents towards popularizing these ideas at home and outside. Let this reform begin at home. If the educated and cultured people begin to practice these reforms in their homes, they will be bound to be eagerly copied by the rest of the people who naturally look upon them as leaders of society.

Finally, there is much that women themselves can do. It has already been said that the emancipation of women is only a part of the larger question of the emancipation of mankind, that without Socialism, there cannot be any liberation of women. Women therefore must become socialists themselves, join the army of liberation, agitate for reforms, teach their illiterate dumb sisters, and thus help to bring the millennium.

But perhaps it is too much to ask every girl to do all this. If so, there are a few things which all educated girls can do. First, they ought to decide that they will remain economically independent throughout their life, that is, even after they are married. It is certainly possible for educated girls to find some employment as

teachers, nurses, doctors and in various other capacities. Secondly, they ought to make their own choice of husbands. Unless they take an active part in choosing their life-partners, they might find their dreams of freedom and equality rudely shattered. They must not wait for their parents to find out husbands for them; if they do, they merely postpone the day of their deliverance. Of course, it is essential also to warn young ladies not to be impetuous and foolish. Too many girls rashly rush into alliances which they repent on the morrow. Above all they must learn to be steady and self-controlled and self-respecting. Thirdly, they ought to insist on marrying in the civil and not in the religious way. Religion has been most iniquitous where women are concerned; unless they defy that religion it is unlikely that the Hindu Law which is based on the four-thousand-year-old utterances of ancient holy men will be changed. A civil marriage promises them a very considerable measure of equality and liberty, whereas a Vedic marriage takes away almost all the liberties which are essential for a decent human life. Besides, there is everything to be gained and nothing to be lost by beginning to treat marriage as a civil contract and not as a religious sacrament; for the religious attitude towards anything makes all healthy and realistic approach impossible. Abandonment of the religious standpoint and adoption of the secular one is always the beginning of wisdom. Finally, women must learn to guard their rights and liberties vigilantly. The price of liberty, we are told, is perpetual vigilance. Nay, it is more. Sometimes it may be necessary to sacrifice one's all in the defence of that liberty. Unless liberty is prized thus and cherished, it soon degenerates into a sham and a later generation has to go through a harsh atone-

ment for lack of vigilance on the part of their parents. It is depressing in this connexion to notice a sad lack of this seriousness and vigilance in our young educated women. Most girls in colleges are content to dress themselves in bright-coloured saris, and to frequent cafés, cinema-houses, and parties, and a little later they are willing to settle down as mothers and housewives. It is sad to watch these girls who have luckily been rewarded with the best opportunities the country has to offer neglect to make any serious use of those opportunities. It is to be hoped that this state of affairs will be short-lived, that the young women of this country will assume a fitting seriousness, and prepare themselves to take their proper share of burden in the life of the country.

It is in the hope that some at least of these young women (and some men, too, of course) will read this book, think for themselves the problems posed and the answers given and, having armed themselves with knowledge and conviction, proceed to set things right, that it has been written.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

It is hoped that after reading this book, some at least of the readers will be inclined to read some more books on the subject. For their guidance a short list of some of the most famous books is given below.

Bertrand Russell: *Marriage and Morals*

Bernard Shaw: *Preface to Getting Married*

do        *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Social-  
ism and Capitalism*

Ethel Mannin: *Women and the Revolution*

Havelock Ellis: *Man and Woman*

do        "Family" (in *Whither Mankind*)

Edited by Charles Beard

Ben Lindsay: *Revolt of the Modern Youth*

do        *Companionate Marriage*

Mary Wollstonecraft: *Vindication of the Rights of Women*

J. S. Mill: *Subjection of Women*

Friedrich Engels: *Origin of the Family*

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